

Advocates for Substance Abuse Prevention
P.O. Box 369
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*Public Health Committee
Room 1 D, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106*

February 6, 2009

*Honorable Senator Jonathan Harris, Committee Chair
Honorable Representative Elizabeth Ritter, Committee Chair*

Members of the Public Health Committee

*Re: Raised Bill 6262
An Act concerning Regional Action Councils (RACs)*

*Dear Mr. Chairman, Madam Chairwoman,
Members of the Public Health Committee:*

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Maryanne Van Aken, and I am the Chairman of the Local Prevention Council for Woodbury and Bethlehem Connecticut, which is better known as ASAP: Advocates for Substance Abuse Prevention. I am writing this testimony in opposition of Raised Bill 6262 which would establish 5 Regional Action Councils for substance abuse prevention and treatment planning. Currently, there are 14 Regional Action Councils that oversee sub-regional substance abuse prevention needs, serving smaller groups of towns and communities, as opposed to five "Super-RACs" that would cover as many as 44 towns in some regions. This proposal might work, if planning and administration were the only functions that RACs performed for us. But it is not. It is not their sole function by any stretch of the imagination. One of the most important jobs that they perform is to develop relationships within the communities they serve. Our RAC has been directly involved with our Local Prevention Council in the following activities:

- ❖ Hosting and moderating a Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking.*

- ❖ *Leveraging funds to support parent alcohol, tobacco and other drug education efforts.*
- ❖ *Working with law enforcement in our town to create a workshop and visual resources on Teen Driving Safety, related to alcohol & drug involved driving.*
- ❖ *Providing written materials and current data at a Citizens Police Academy training on Prescription and Over-the Counter Drugs.*
- ❖ *Working with ASAP members in all sectors of the community, from the Superintendent's office, to middle school students, from the elderly to teens.*
- ❖ *Meeting bi-monthly with the RAC's Prevention Committee, where school social workers, counselors and other individuals can come together to address prevention needs, share these with their RAC Director and develop the tools & resources to meet gaps in services.*

*These are just a few examples of the grassroots activities RACs perform, they are **program supporters**, not just **program planners**!*

The plan to restructure the RAC system would more than triple the number of communities these "Super-RACs" would serve. The expectation that these important relationships and hands on work would continue when our LPC would be 1 of 44, rather than 1 of 12 is completely unrealistic!

*We should all understand that it is far more cost effective to fund successful prevention programs than it is to pay for lifelong rehabilitation for recovering addicts. In these difficult economic times as people struggle in their daily lives our communities need all the support they can get. **NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO DECIMATE OUR REGIONAL ACTION COUNCILS!***

Thank you for your time,



Maryanne Van Aken

A.S.A.P.

Chair